

democratic Iraq can only come about if average Iraqis are willing to sacrifice to build it.

On Sunday, they rose to the occasion. Some lost their lives, but their lives were not lost in vain. I am convinced that a country by the Iraqi people and for the Iraqi people will be built on the foundation laid down by the voters on Sunday. And having sacrificed to gain a democratic Iraq, they won't let it go easily.

Baghdad's mayor was overwhelmed by the turnout of voters at city hall where thousands were celebrating and holding up their purple ink-stained fingers with pride. The mayor said, "I cannot describe what I am seeing. It is incredible. This is a vote for the future, for the children, for the rule of law, for humanity, for love." It is truly a new beginning for Iraq.

The election in Iraq clearly demonstrates that Iraqi people are like people everywhere. They desire to create a future in an environment that is safe and allows them to reach their full potential as human beings, whatever that potential may be. The election did not occur in a vacuum. It is the latest and most dramatic example of Iraqis taking control of their country's destiny.

In less than a year, the Iraqi Regular Army and Intervention Forces have grown from one operational battalion to 21 battalions, with six more scheduled to become operational over the next month.

Last month, the Iraqi National Guard was incorporated into the Army, making a total of 68 Iraqi battalions conducting operations.

Today, the Iraqi Police Service has over 55,000 trained and equipped police officers, more than double the amount of just 6 months ago. More than 38,000 additional police are on duty and scheduled for training.

As of last month, more than 108,000 local Iraqis had been hired to work on U.S.-funded reconstruction projects, using as many local subcontractors as possible.

Yes, things are, indeed looking up for Iraq and the Iraqi people. But there is still hard work ahead. It is a difficult process to transform a society that has never known democracy. One hopeful sign occurred earlier this week when influential figures from the Sunni community signaled their willingness to engage the new Iraqi government and play a role in drafting the constitution. Thirteen parties, including a representative of the powerful Association of Muslim Scholars and other parties that boycotted the vote, agreed Thursday to take part in the drafting of the constitution, which will be the transitional parliament's main task. The leading Shiite candidate to be Iraq's new Prime Minister welcomed these overtures and said he was willing to "offer the maximum" to involve Sunni Arabs in the new government.

Yes, change takes time, and only time will tell if the Iraqi election will

go down as one of the most important dates in modern history. I'm inclined to believe it will. But between now and when the history books are written it was enough, for me, to stand in awe of the courage of a free people half a world away.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On September 24, 2004, a young man was attacked outside of a club in Davis, CA. The attack on the victim was apparently due to a case of mistaken identity. The victim in the case resembled a gay man known by the assailant, and the attack was motivated by the attacker's belief that the victim was gay. During the attack, the victim suffered a broken nose and was knocked unconscious by his assailant. The attacker repeatedly yelled slurs regarding the victim's sexual orientation during the assault.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

DEAN MEINEN

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to publicly recognize Dean Meinen of my D.C. staff on his contributions and accomplishments to my office and the State of South Dakota. For years, Dean Meinen has served as my economic development director. He is leaving my office to go work with Strategic Marketing Innovations, which represents science and technology firms throughout the country.

I know first hand that Dean has done a great deal to enhance opportunity and prosperity all across South Dakota. He is an extraordinarily talented person with a great deal of energy and ambition. Dean is not only a great friend, but a well-respected staffer throughout the U.S. Senate. He has earned the respect and admiration of all those who have had the opportunity to work with him. His passion and love for his work have improved the lives of countless South Dakotans. Dean's friendly demeanor and wealth of knowledge have helped him develop close relationships with his colleagues and with community leaders throughout our State. His tireless effort to dig

for details and explore all sides of particular issues reflects both his skill and his dedication to his work.

I first met Dean when he was a fresh-faced young man that I hired for an entry-level mail processing job. I was impressed by his enthusiasm, his belief in the good people of South Dakota, and his political abilities that were developed well beyond his years. A few years later, I asked him to run my 1994 reelection campaign. After the campaign was over, I hired him back to do legislative work in my congressional office. For the past several years, he has served as my economic development director and has worked very hard to advance South Dakota's prosperity and to diversify our economy.

Dean's departure is a huge loss to South Dakota, and I personally know that he struggled with the decision to leave my office. His kind of leadership and character is exactly what the economic development community needs to evolve and succeed in the future. I wish but the best for him on all his exciting new challenges and opportunities. It is with great honor that I share his impressive accomplishments with my colleagues.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, each Congress I rise to honor February as Black History Month. Each February since 1926, our Nation has recognized the contributions of Black Americans to the history of our Nation.

This is no accident; February is a significant month in Black American history. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass, President Abraham Lincoln, and scholar and civil rights leader W.E.B. DuBois were born in the month of February. The 15th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified 132 years ago this month, preventing race discrimination in the right to vote. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded in February in New York City. Last Tuesday, February 1, was the 45th anniversary of the Greensboro Four's historic sit-in. And on February 25, 1870, this body welcomed its first black Senator, Hiram R. Revels of Mississippi.

In this important month I want to celebrate some of the contributions made by Black Americans in my home State of Oregon. Since Marcus Lopez, who sailed with Captain Robert Gray in 1788, became the first person of African descent known to set foot in Oregon, a great many Black Americans have helped shape the history of my State. Throughout this month, I will come to the floor to highlight some of their stories.

Beatrice Cannady moved to Oregon in 1910. Soon thereafter she married E.D. Cannady, who was the founder of the Advocate, Portland's only African-American newspaper at the time. Beatrice Cannady quickly became one of the most important civil rights activists in Oregon. Just 4 years after her